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Study of calendar pattern of Big Ten universities and Minnesota colleges, alternative schedules on semester and quarter plans, requests for further information on definition of terms and effect of each system on curriculum, instructional practice, student and faculty interests, administrative efficiency, and summer session.

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University of Minnesota

INTERIM REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE STUDYING THE SEMESTER VS. THE QUARTER SYSTEM

January 8, 1953

At its meeting on June 5, 1952, the All-University Schedule Committee appointed a subcommittee to investigate the attitudes of the faculties of the various colleges and the students concerning the semester-quarter term issue and to formulate a concrete proposal. The subcommittee now returns to its parent committee with a summary of data collected to date, and a request for further instruction.

Those named to the subcommittee were Keith McFarland, Alfred Vaughan, and Russell Cooper, chairman. At the suggestion of these three, the All-University Congress appointed three students to participate also -- namely, Joyce Brumbaugh, a General College freshman; Doug Steenson, a Business junior; and Irene Wencl, an S.L.A. sophomore. This report is the product of the cooperative activity and thinking of these committee members.

The Committee recognizes the far-reaching implications of any change in its term structure, and is anxious that the problem be studied thoroughly and objectively, before any decision is reached. At the same time it is evident that the University enrollment is due to increase sharply during the next seven years and that any change contemplated should be undertaken as soon as possible before all energies are consumed in meeting the deluge.

At its beginning in 1867, the University of Minnesota adopted the three-term system, with a long winter vacation enabling students to get out and teach in the rural schools. Later, as normal schools and institutions began to supply the requisite public school teachers, American universities gave up their long winter vacation, and a large number shifted to the semester basis until 1918. At that time, the Council of National Defense asked the colleges to sponsor Student Army Training Corps, and recommended that they "consider the advisability of dividing the year into four quarters of approximately twelve weeks each". A large number of universities adopted the quarter plan to meet S.A.T.C. needs, and the University of Minnesota has retained this system to the present day.

PRACTICES OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The experience of other institutions is important in this study, both because of the insight it may give concerning the merits of the two systems, and also because of the desirability of some correspondence between Minnesota practice and the practice elsewhere. On the next page we are listing the Big Ten Universities and the Minnesota colleges, indicating their pattern and the approximate period from fall opening classes to the spring commencement.

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Big Ten Universities

University of Illinois	Semester	Sept. 18 to June 18
Indiana University	Semester	Sept. 18 to June 9
State University of Iowa	Semester	Sept. 22 to June 4
Michigan State College	Three-term	Sept. 26 to June 17
University of Michigan	Semester	Sept. 20 to June 9
University of Minnesota	Three-term	Sept. 29 to June 11
Northwestern University	Three-term	Sept. 25 to June 10
Ohio State University	Three-term	Sept. 28 to June 9
Purdue University	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 15
University of Wisconsin	Semester	Sept. 29 to June 11

Other Minnesota Colleges

Augsburg College	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 3
Bethel College	Three-term	Sept. 12 to June 6
Carleton College	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 9
College of St. Benedict	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 4
College of St. Catherine	Three-term	Sept. 24 to June 4
College of St. Scholastica	Semester	Sept. 20 to June 12
College of St. Teresa	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 8
College of St. Thomas	Semester	Sept. 5 to June 4
Concordia College, Moorhead	Semester	Sept. 12 to June 7
Gustavus Adolphus College	Semester	Sept. 8 to May 31
Hamline University	Semester	Sept. 15 to June 9
Macalester College	Semester	Sept. 18 to June 9
St. John's University	Semester	Sept. 11 to June 4
St. Mary's College	Semester	Sept. 9 to June 4
St. Olaf College	Semester	Sept. 12 to June 7
State Teachers College, Bemidji	Three-term	Sept. 2 to June 4
State Teachers College, Mankato	Three-term	Sept. 8 to June 4
State Teachers College, Moorhead	Three-term	Sept. 9 to June 9
State Teachers College, St. Cloud	Three-term	Sept. 11 to June 4
State Teachers College, Winona	Three-term	Sept. 8 to June 9
Austin Junior College	Three-term	Sept. 2 to May 29
Bethany Lutheran College	Semester	Sept. 3 to June 8
Brainerd Junior College	Three-term	Sept. 7 to June 5
Concordia College, St. Paul	Semester	Sept. 9 to June 11
Ely Junior College	Three-term	Sept. 8 to June 5
Eveleth Junior College	Semester	Sept. 2 to June 4
Hibbing Junior College	Semester	Sept. 1 to June 6
Itasca Junior College	Three-term	Sept. 2 to May 28
Rochester Junior College	Semester	Sept. 8 to June 3
Virginia Junior College	Semester	Sept. 2 to June 4
Worthington Junior College	Three-term	Sept. 2 to May 28

Educational literature reveals very few studies on the semester vs. quarter problem, although a brief bibliography is attached to this report. One of the most systematic studies of the problem was conducted at Ohio University in 1930-32, after which the faculty voted to remain on the quarter system.

Dean Esther Brown of Northeast Missouri State Teachers' College conducted in 1952 a questionnaire study among the teachers' colleges, university departments of education, and liberal arts colleges, which are members of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Of the 250 questionnaires, 230 were returned and revealed that 158 are on the semester system, and 72 on the quarter system. It was also discovered that during the past 15 years, five institutions have shifted from the semester to the quarter system, and 23 have changed from the quarter to the semester. We know of no other such survey of recent date.

The reasons for preferring one system or the other are summarized in the Brown study, and are essentially the same as those outlined by Dean Buchta in his memorandum of 1947 appended to this report. There are obviously strong arguments on both sides of the question, and the ultimate decision will have to rest upon the weight which is ascribed to the various factors at this institution.

One of the serious questions at Minnesota has been whether the College of Agriculture could adapt to a semester arrangement as easily as to the quarter. Hence Keith McFarland was encouraged to write to deans of agriculture in comparable institutions to determine what their experience may be. The results of his inquiry are appended to this report, and they show that agricultural colleges are operating under both systems and for the most part without much desire for change. Apparently, colleges of agriculture like other university units can function successfully with either system.

ASCERTAINING OPINION AT MINNESOTA

The next step in the committee's activities should be to appraise facts and opinions concerning the situation at Minnesota. After some preliminary investigation, it has become clear that this is a complex assignment and requires some definition before any intelligent inquiry can be undertaken. For example, what do we mean precisely by the "quarter system", and by the "semester system"? Is it possible that many of the present weaknesses of the quarter system could be rectified simply by reorganizing the arrangement and without going over to the semester system? When we talk about the semester system precisely what date and length of term are implied. People can't intelligently answer an inquiry on this problem until they know the nature of the alternatives.

Once the terms have been defined, it should be possible to assess the effect of any change on the students and various agencies of the University. As a preliminary inquiry, the committee has asked the Office of Admissions and Records to indicate whether the two-term system would make a significant improvement in its efficiency and economy as compared with the present three-term arrangement. Since the inquiry was made in a general fashion, the reply also had to be general, but it was indicated that savings would probably accrue through greater accuracy and service to the students as well as in a reduction of supply and personnel costs.

A similar inquiry to the office of student employment revealed that late ajournment in the spring creates summer employment difficulties for University students, though this is partially balanced by the advantage gained through late opening in the fall. Again, precise dates must be studied before accurate assessment of employment advantages and disadvantages can be made.

To lend precision to further discussion the committee asked Mr. Vaughan to prepare alternative schedules on both the semester and quarter systems and these are given below.

Quarter Plans (1952-53 Calendar)

I.	Fall	September 10 (Wednesday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes
		November 20-26	Final exams)	one week of finals
	Winter	December 1 (Monday)	Classes begin)	11 weeks of classes
		December 21-January 4	Xmas recess)	One week of exams
		February 27- March 5	Final exams)	
	Spring	March 16 (Monday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes
		May 23-29	Final exams)	One week of exams
II.	Fall	September 17 (Wednesday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes
		November 26 (Wednesday)	Classes end)	One week of finals
		December 1-6	Final exams)	
	Winter	December 8 (Monday)	Classes begin)	11 weeks of classes
		December 22-January 4	Xmas recess)	One week of exams
		March 9-14	Final exams)	
	Spring	March 23 (Monday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes
		May 30-June 5	Final Exams)	One week of exams
III.	Fall	September 29 (Monday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes (because 3 days for Thanksgiving and 2 days to start finals) One week of exams.
		December 12-18	Final exams)	
	Winter	January 5 (Monday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes (because 2 days to start exams) One week of exams
		March 13-19	Final exams	
	Spring	March 30 (Monday)	Classes begin)	10 weeks of classes
		June 6-12	Final exams)	Oneeweek of exams

Semester Plans (1952 - 53 Calendar)

I.	Fall	September 15 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15½ weeks of classes
		December 21-January 4	Xmas recess)	Excluding Thanksgiving
		January 17-23	Final Exams)	One week of finals
	Spring	January 28 (Wednesday)	Classes begin)	16 weeks of classes
		April 3-6	Easter recess)	One week of finals
		May 23-29	Final Exams	
II.	Fall	September 22 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15½ weeks of classes
		December 21-Jan. 4	Xmas recess)	Excluding Thanksgiving
		January 24-30	Final Exams)	One week of finals
	Spring	February 4 (Wednesday)	Classes begin)	16 weeks of classes
		April 3-6	Easter recess)	
		May 30-June5	Final Exams)	One week of finals
III.	Fall	September 22 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15½ weeks of classes
		December 21-January 4	Xmas recess)	Excluding Thanksgiving
		January 24-30	Finals)	One week of finals
	Spring	February 4 (Wednesday)	Classes begin)	15½ weeks of classes
		March 29-April 5	Easter recess)	
		May 30-June 5	Final exams)	One week of finals
IV.	Fall	September 29 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15½ weeks of classes
		December 21-January 4	Xmas recess)	Excluding Thanksgiving
		January 31-February 6	Final exams)	One week of finals
	Spring	February 9 (Monday)	Classes begin)	16 weeks of classes
		March 29-April 5	Easter recess)	
		June 6-12	Final exams)	One week of finals
V.	Fall	September 22 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15 weeks of classes
		November 27-30	Thanksgiving recess)	
		December 21-January 4	Xmas recess)	
		January 22-28	Final exams)	One week of finals
	Spring	February 2 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15 weeks of classes
		March 29-April 5	Easter recess)	
		May 23-29	Final exams)	One week of finals
VI.	Fall	September 1 (Monday)	Classes begin)	15 weeks of classes
		November 27-30	Thanksgiving recess)	
		December 17-23	Final exams)	One week of finals
		December 23-January 11	Xmas recess	
	Spring	January 12 (Monday)	Classes begin)	16 weeks of classes
		April 3-6	Easter recess)	
		May 9-15	Final exams)	One week of finals

PROPOSED AGENDA FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Committee requests that the All-University Schedule Committee discuss these alternatives and help define the terms for any further investigation. Definition is needed particularly on the following two points before the campus-wide survey is undertaken.

1. Which semester plan and which quarter plan seems best for its type and therefore, should be used in defining the terms.

2. Since many people prefer the quarter system only if undergraduate courses are largely 4-credit offerings (enabling students to carry only three or four courses at a time) is such arrangement feasible at Minnesota.

In carrying on further study, it is proposed that evidence be gathered from every possible source, including further study of records and an assessment of opinion by the affected departments, faculty members, and students. In some cases this can probably be best done by a questionnaire, in some places by a scientific poll of opinion, and in some cases by departmental deliberation and recommendation.

In conducting the investigation, it is proposed that the following factors should be analyzed in detail, probably using the Bureau of Institutional Research as an agency to assist in the study. These factors would include:

Curriculum. Under which plan can course materials be most efficiently organized? Is it possible to increase the proponderance of four-credit and five-credit courses for undergraduate students in the quarter system, and is this desirable? Would the wholesale reorganization of curricula required by such a change to the semester system be desirable and worth the effort?

Instructional Practice. Is the instructional job better accomplished with an intensive short term or by a longer term? Which system better promotes faculty-student relationships? Under which system does one get more frequent or better examinations?

Student Interests. Which arrangements best permit vacation employment? Does the term system have any bearing on the feasibility of part-time employment while in college? Does frequent opportunity of entering and leaving school have advantage to students? Do students prefer paying fees in two installments or in three?

Faculty Interests. Which arrangement best provides for faculty leaves, research activities, etc.? Which system reduces essential clerical work?

Administrative Efficiency. Which system better provides use of the University plant? Which system provides for more efficient use of service agencies and counseling services? Which system better relates the University to other institutions? Which system better relates the University to high school graduation and entering freshmen.

Summer Session. What would be the length and character of the summer session under the semester system? Would the term arrangement have any bearing on the number of students wishing to continue into the summer?

If the All-University Scheduling Committee approves, the Committee recommends that an extensive investigation be conducted among all interested parties, following the lines suggested above, and using the definitions determined by the scheduling committee.